



Town of
Westford
Massachusetts

Town Manager's Newsletter

September 2014



Jodi Ross,
Town
Manager

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www.westfordma.gov/tm
978-692-5500

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Watch Meetings Online

westford
CAT

www.westfordcat.org

Dear Westford residents,

The Board of Selectmen, at their August 26th meeting, voted to declare the former Graniteville Fire Station, located at 54 Broadway Street, as surplus property and available for sale. The board will entertain additional public input and discussions regarding the property disposition at their September 16th meeting. At this meeting, the board also voted to approve a lease agreement with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, an inter-municipal agreement addendum, and an environmental insurance policy for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. These were all steps necessary to embark on the next phase of the trail extension.

The Westford Anodizing building at 12 North Main Street continues to be a project the town is addressing. Senator Eileen Donoghue and Representative Jim Arciero were instrumental in applying for inclusion in a recently passed \$2.2B Environmental Bond. Westford has been allocated \$1.5M to be used for the cleanup and either demolition and/or restoration of the historic mill located at that site. The Selectmen also approved contracts for a Phase II environmental assessment and a hazardous materials survey for the property. We are seeking interested individuals to serve on a task force to make recommendations to the Selectmen on how to proceed with this site. Interested residents may apply online at this link: [Citizen Activity Form](#) or contact Matt Hanson in the Town Manager's office at mhanson@westfordma.gov or at 978-692-5501. The first meeting is scheduled for Wednesday September 17th at 2pm in the Town Hall meeting room.

Our Selectmen also voted to enforce the Cease and Desist Order they issued Drew Gardens, 66-68 Boston Road, in response to the compost piles which appeared this spring. The Drew Gardens Task Force has also hired an appraiser to appraise the property, which has a Purchase & Sale in the Amount of \$735,000, which has been presented to the town.

The Town Manager's Office has released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the installation of a Wireless Communications Facility (Cell Tower), at the town's Highway Facility, located at 28 North Street as approved in article 17 of our March 23, 2013 Annual Town Meeting. All proposals are due back to the Town Manager's office by September 30th, at which time they will be publicly opened. Applicants are required to provide proposals which will not only generate annual rental income to the town, but also provide additional space for the town's public safety antenna to co-locate on the pole at this location. A successful applicant will be required to follow all of the requirements in the town's Zoning Bylaw, Section 6.2 which outlines the process for siting and constructing a cell tower.

(continued on next page)

WWW.WESTFORDMA.GOV

We issued an RFP for a Town-Wide Facility Study and the results are in, including a 10 year plan for addressing these maintenance issues. This report will be presented to all boards/committees on September 11th at 7:00pm at the police station conference room. WCAT will be broadcasting live if you are unable to attend.

Many thanks to our State Representative Jim Arciero who recently hosted a summer cookout at our Cameron Senior Center for our seniors. Burgers and hotdogs were the cuisine of the day, topped off by a delicious chocolate/yellow cake for all to enjoy.

Volunteers have been busy at the Cameron Senior Center on Thursdays in the summer and fall distributing vegetables from Gaining Ground non-profit organization that "grows organic produce for hunger relief with help from volunteers of all ages and abilities, who work and learn in our gardens."

Our very own Chip Barrett, Highway Superintendent, received the Member of the Year Award for 2014 from the American Public Works Association for all of his efforts to help not only us, but other towns with his vast knowledge and expertise related to public works operations. Please join me in congratulating Chip on this accomplishment!

Please mark your calendars for our October 20, 2014 Special Town Meeting. I will review the articles contained in the warrant in next month's newsletter. The calendar for the meeting may be found at this link: [Special Town Meeting](#).

There are several openings on local boards and committees, including the Affordable Housing, Bylaw Review, Communications Advisory, Cultural Council, Historical Commission, Pedestrian Safety, Public Works Initiative Committee, and others, and I urge you to peruse our website for information about the work of these committees. If you have interest, please complete a Citizen's Activity form at this link: [Citizen Activity Form](#) or stop by and fill out a form in the town manager's office.

Sincerely,



Jodi Ross



The Council on Aging recently accepted two new vans from the LRTA. The new vans replace our 2007 vehicles. From Left to Right: Eugene Jungbluth, Lead Van Administration; Joanne Sheehan, Director Council on Aging; Laura Mitchell, Lead Van Dispatch; Jodi Ross, James Scanlan, LRTA Administrator; Mickey Crocker, Chair, Council on Aging.

Veterans Services

Lowell Spinners Military Appreciation Night – August 30



A group of 30 Westford veterans, families and friends attended the Lowell Spinner's last home game of the season that Saturday night against the Aberdeen IronBirds compliments of the Lowell Spinners and generous donations. Although the outcome of the game did not favor well for the Spinners, it was a great night for a game and everyone stayed through the entire game for the terrific fireworks show that followed.

This was the second game free tickets were provided. All the Westford clan, sat in three rows grouped together, a thousand tickets were offered to active duty, reservists and veterans plus their guests. The Westford Veterans Services office will periodically offer outings like this when they become available. More importantly is that the office is available to our local veterans and their family members to check on what benefits may be available to them at federal and state levels.



Don't forget the trip to the Bedford VA Medical Center on October 15th for veterans that want to enroll in the VA health care programs! Pre-registration is required. The Veterans Services Department's website is westfordma.gov/veterans; Facebook is www.facebook.com/WestfordDVS. Our telephone number is (978) 392-1170.

Engineering Department



Route 110 Construction Update

MassDOT Contractors have completed the traffic signal transition, and the old signals have been removed in time for the afternoon commute. Motorists will notice that the new signals are slightly offset to accommodate the new traffic lanes which will be installed over the next few weeks. In the meantime, the new signals are fully functional to allow commuters to move through the intersection.

For more information about the intersection improvements, please visit the project website at: www.westfordma.gov/110

Tax Collector - Treasurer's Office

Hello from the Tax Collector-Treasurer's office,

Telephone scams are nothing new, but people are still being fooled. The IRS recently published the following article to give taxpayers guidelines to help protect them from being victimized. I thought it was very helpful and wanted to share it with Westford taxpayers.

Christine Collins

Tax Collector-Treasurer

Scam Phone Calls Continue; IRS Identifies Five Easy Ways to Spot Suspicious Calls

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service issued a consumer alert today providing taxpayers with additional tips to protect themselves from telephone scam artists calling and pretending to be with the IRS.

These callers may demand money or may say you have a refund due and try to trick you into sharing private information. These con artists can sound convincing when they call. They may know a lot about you, and they usually alter the caller ID to make it look like the IRS is calling. They use fake names and bogus IRS identification badge numbers. If you don't answer, they often leave an "urgent" callback request.

"These telephone scams are being seen in every part of the country, and we urge people not to be deceived by these threatening phone calls," IRS Commissioner John Koskinen said. "We have formal processes in place for people with tax issues. The IRS respects taxpayer rights, and these angry, shake-down calls are not how we do business."

The IRS reminds people that they can know pretty easily when a supposed IRS caller is a fake. Here are five things the scammers often do but the IRS will not do. Any one of these five things is a tell-tale sign of a scam.

The IRS will never:

1. Call you about taxes you owe without first mailing you an official notice.
2. Demand that you pay taxes without giving you the opportunity to question or appeal the amount they say you owe.
3. Require you to use a specific payment method for your taxes, such as a prepaid debit card.
4. Ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.
5. Threaten to bring in local police or other law-enforcement groups to have you arrested for not paying.

If you get a phone call from someone claiming to be from the IRS and asking for money, here's what you should do:

- If you know you owe taxes or think you might owe, call the IRS at 1.800.829.1040. The IRS workers can help you with a payment issue.
- If you know you don't owe taxes or have no reason to believe that you do, report the incident to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) at 1.800.366.4484 or at www.tigta.gov.

If you've been targeted by this scam, also contact the Federal Trade Commission and use their "FTC Complaint Assistant" at FTC.gov. Please add "IRS Telephone Scam" to the comments of your complaint.

Remember, too, the IRS does not use email, text messages or any social media to discuss your personal tax issue. For more information on reporting tax scams, go to www.irs.gov and type "scam" in the search box.

Additional information about tax scams are available on IRS social media sites, including YouTube

<http://youtu.be/UHlxTX4rTRU?list=PL2A3E7A9BD8A8D41D>. and Tumblr

<http://internalrevenueservice.tumblr.com> where people can search "scam" to find all the scam-related posts.

J.V. Fletcher Library

Check Out Some of Our Popular Digital Collections: Magazines, Movies and Music!

Zinio: Download digital issues of magazines to your smart device or computer for free. Examples include: **Smithsonian, Us Weekly, Bloomberg Business News, MacWorld,** and many more! There are no waiting lists for the digital magazines and you can download as many as you want. Once an issue is downloaded it's yours to keep. Look for new title additions in the upcoming months.



zinio™

the world's largest newsstand is now available through your library's website!

IndieFlix: Coined "The Netflix of Independent Films," this free service provides online streaming of award-winning independent films, shorts, and documentaries. Choose from thousands of titles and browse by genre, country, film festival, featured filmmakers, etc. Enthusiastic movie fans will find films for all tastes and audiences.



Enjoy 1,000's of award winning independent films whenever and wherever you want them!

Freegal: Free downloadable music! Westford cardholders are allotted up to five downloads per week. Select from over six million songs from Sony Music. And the songs aren't on loan, they are yours to keep. Browse 100 genres of music including; classical, country, pop, rock, jazz, children's music, rap, etc. Explore new music and add to your personal collection.

Popular MP3 Music from your library website



For step-by-step directions and access to these services, please visit the J. V. Fletcher Library's home page and scroll down the menu on the left hand side of the page.

www.westfordlibrary.org

Town Clerk's Corner

State Primary is Tuesday, September 9, 2014

Polls will be open from 7:00am until 8:00pm

- [View sample ballots](#)
- [Check your Voter Registration Status](#)
- [Find out where to vote](#)
- Absentee ballots for the State Primary are now available.

The deadline to apply for an absentee ballot is 12 noon on Monday, September 8th.

[Apply for an absentee ballot](#)



According to the Secretary of State's website, to be counted, a completed absentee ballot must be received at the Town Clerk's Office **before 8:00pm on Election Day**. (general state elections have an extended deadline for overseas and military voters)

[Information on military and overseas absentee voting.](#)

Special Town Meeting is Monday, October 20, 2014

Voter registration deadline: October 10, 2014 8:00pm

State Election is Tuesday, November 4, 2014

Voter registration deadline: October 15, 2014 8:00pm



Emergency Management

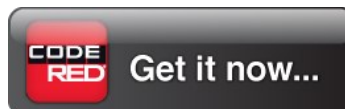


CodeRED is a Community Messaging System, used to notify residences of emergency, non-emergency and general information through an automated telephone dialing system, which sends a message automatically to thousands of targeted residences and/or contact databases.

Most residents will not need to take action in order to receive notification of events on their home telephone. However, if you have recently moved into Westford, changed your home phone number, or have an unlisted phone number you will need to register your phone number. If you had previously registered in the CityWatch system you do not need to register again in CodeRED.

[Click here](#) to register additional phone numbers or email addresses.

Click the icon below to download the CodeRED Mobile Alert App for your smartphone.



Council On Aging - Coming Events

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL SENIOR CENTER MONTH!!!

ITALIAN SAUSAGES

Chef Bill Vullo will be grilling Italian sausages, peppers and onions for all to enjoy on Monday, September 15th doors open at 11AM lunch served at 11:30 AM, Bingo will follow lunch. Charge is \$2.00. Caesar salad will be provided, but please bring a dessert to share. We will be eating indoors. Reservations by Thursday, Sept. 11th are a must to plan for food. Please call 978-692-5523.

"ALL THE PRESIDENTS' WOMEN"

Come join us on Friday, September 19th at 12:45 PM for this live performance which looks into the lives (sometimes behind closed doors!) of some of our United States presidents and their wives. Find out which of our most famous first ladies was committed to a mental institution by her own son! Have we already had a female president? Could one of our first ladies have murdered her husband while he was still in office? This will be performed by the Delvena Theatre Company, who has presented "Meet Julia Child!", "Lizzie Borden" and "W.C. Fields & Mae West" here in the past. After the performance we will be serving Root Beer Floats! Please call 978-692-5523 to sign-up. "This program is supported by a grant from the Westford Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency."

SPAGHETTI SUPPER

Join the Friends of Cameron on Thursday, October 2nd doors open at 4 PM dinner served at 5 PM. Bingo will follow dinner. Charge is \$2.00. Please bring a dessert to share. Reservations are a must to plan for food. Please call 978-692-5523. Clean up crew needed.

NATIONAL GRID CONSUMER ADVOCACY PRESENTATION On Friday, October 17th at 10 AM Corey Manson will be here at Cameron to explain his new role in Massachusetts and meet with clients who may need his assistance. The National Grid Consumer Advocate's mission is to "assist financially vulnerable customers by directly engaging with agencies such as healthcare centers, departments of social services, food pantries, and senior centers. Equipped with a laptop, the National Grid Consumer Advocate can review customer accounts, provide individual bill payment assistance, energy education, and information on low income programs and other services." Anyone can drop in to meet and talk with Corey.

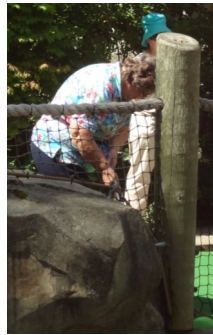
To view the complete
Council On Aging Newsletter
please visit our website at:

www.westfordma.gov/coa and click on [Newsletters](#).

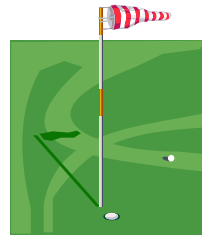


Westford Senior Center

Council on Aging (COA)



Mini Golf Outing.
Held on Wednesday,
September 3rd.
At Kimball Farm



Water Department

Nabnasset Water Main Improvement Project Update

The Nabnasset Water Main Improvement project, which commenced in early August, is roughly three-quarters finished, with expected completion by the end of September.

As of Friday, August 5 the contractor has installed the new 8 inch ductile iron water main on Edwards Ave from Oak Hill Road to Trails End Road. In addition, two new fire hydrants have been installed. Customer services should be connected to the newly-installed water main starting Friday, August 5. Once the remaining eight inch ductile water main and additional two fire hydrants are installed, and customer services are connected to the new water main the affected roads will be temporarily paved for the winter and be re-surfaced (full-width pavement overlay) in the spring of 2015.

We appreciate everyone's patience with the construction noise, dust, and street closures, and are confident that the benefits of improved flow and fire protection will be worth the temporary inconveniences.

For any questions or comments about the project please feel free to contact the Water Department at 978-692-5529. Project updates will be posted on the Water Department website at www.westfordma.gov/water.



New fire hydrant



Road surface removed for connection of customer water services to the new main



New fire hydrant prior to backfill



Compacting backfill over the new water main

Health Department News

Flu/Pneumonia Clinic Schedule Westford Residents Only

The Westford Health Department will sponsor flu/pneumonia clinics on the dates, times and locations listed below. No appointments are necessary. ** Please note that because of limited pediatric vaccine, we request that those under the age of 36 months receive their vaccine from their MD if possible. All children under 18 years must be accompanied by a parent at all clinics. Please bring insurance information to the clinic as the town can seek reimbursement from insurance carriers.

Homebound individuals, who require a home visit, should contact the Health Department at 978-692-5509 to schedule an appointment.

School-based flu clinics *will* be offered again this year to all Westford Public School students this Fall. The FluMist Quadrivalent* nasal spray will be the only form of vaccine offered. Details (including dates and restrictions) will be sent to parents via the WPS Billboard listserv, WPS Superintendent's email, and the Westford Board of Health listserv. Information will not be mailed to the students' homes.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the high-dose flu vaccine called Fluzone for seniors 65 years and older. This year's vaccine is Fluzone High-Dose is formulated to contain the following recommended for the 2014-2015 influenza season: A/California/07/2009 X-179A (H1N1), A/Texas/50/2012 X-223A (H3N2), and B/Massachusetts/02/2012 (B Yamagata lineage).

These vaccines will not prevent illness caused by other viruses. It takes up to 2 weeks or more for protection to develop after the vaccine. Protection lasts about a year. Anyone with an allergy to egg cannot receive this vaccine at one of our public clinics.

Annual influenza vaccine is recommended for **everyone 6 months of age and older**. Everyone, regardless of prior vaccination, will need to be revaccinated to be protected this year.

People at Increased Risk for Influenza-Related Complications:

- All children 6 months through 4 years of age.
- All persons ≥ 50 years of age.
- People 6 months - 18 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy.
- Women who will be pregnant during influenza season and postpartum women.
- People ≥ 6 months of age who have:
- Chronic pulmonary (including asthma), cardiovascular (except hyper-tension), renal, hepatic, neurological, hematologic, or metabolic disorders, including diabetes;
- Immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or HIV);
- Any condition (e.g., cognitive dysfunction, spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders, or other neuromuscular disorders) that can compromise respiratory function or the handling of respiratory secretions or that can increase the risk of aspiration.
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities.
- American Indians/Alaska Natives
- People who are morbidly obese (BMI ≥ 40)

High-Dose Fluzone ONLY for 65 and Older- Walk-In

Thursday, Sept. 25 at the Franco American Club

12:30 - 1:30 Last names beginning with A-H

1:30 - 2:30 Last names beginning with I-Q

2:30 - 3:30 Last names beginning with R-Z

Regular Flu clinics

October 21 6:00 pm- 8:00 pm Millennium, 23 Depot St

October 28 6:00 pm- 8:00 pm Millennium, 23 Depot St

November 7 10:00 am- 12:00 pm J.V. Fletcher Library

November 21 10:00 am- 12:00 pm J.V. Fletcher Library

To get up to date information during the flu season, visit the Health Department website at www.westfordma.gov/health or sign up for our Health Department listserv at www.westfordma.gov/subscriber.

Health Department News (continued)

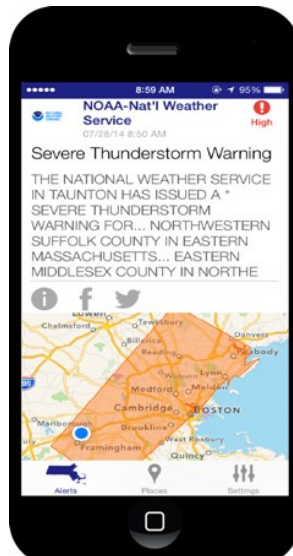
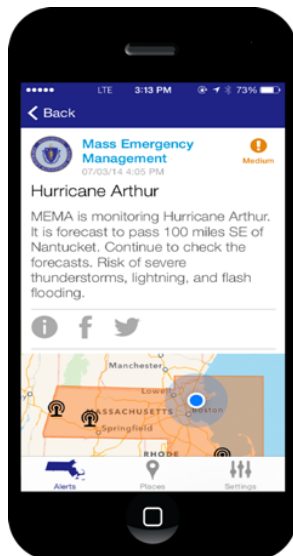
September is National Preparedness Month

Developed by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management, in partnership with state and local agencies, "[Together We're Ready – Massachusetts Prepared.](#)" is a public health campaign that encourages Massachusetts residents and families to plan for their community health needs.

Emergencies can happen at any time, taking a few simple steps now to prepare yourself, your family and your community makes the entire community more resilient and better able to respond to emergency events.



The recent floods and hurricanes have reinforced the importance of having a family emergency preparedness kit. To make it easier for all residents, the Upper Merrimack Valley MRC has purchased supplies in bulk and assembled a kit which can be purchased at the Health Department on the second floor of town hall. This is meant to be a Starter Kit! Please add other items that will be useful to you and your family in an emergency including communication and evacuation plans, important documents and medications. Don't forget your pet needs too! Cost is \$45, payable to the Health Department.



Download Massachusetts Alerts: A free public safety alerting app

Massachusetts Alerts is the must-have emergency alerting app for residents of, and visitors to Massachusetts. Massachusetts Alerts is a communication tool used by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to send you up-to-date public safety information to keep you informed and safe.

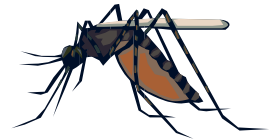
[Wireless Emergency Alerts](#)

Health Department News (continued)

Residents Urged to Remain Vigilant Against Mosquitoes this Fall

Please be reminded that the risk from mosquito-borne illness is considered to continue until an area has had a hard frost which will result in the death of virtually all mosquitoes. A hard, or killing frost, is defined meteorologically as two consecutive hours of temperatures below 28 degrees Fahrenheit. This will occur at different times for different communities, and there may even be variation within Westford based on local geography. Sources of information to assist with determining when a hard frost has occurred can be found on the web, from weather reports from your local media outlets, and also through the National Weather Service's website at: www.erh.noaa.gov/box/stationobs.shtml. Additional, more localized and perhaps more detailed information may be found online at: www.weather.weatherbug.com/MA/Westford-weather.html?zcode=z6286 (Info from Westford Academy). Although mosquitoes are not killed until a hard frost occurs, they become less active when temperatures fall below 50 degrees in the evening.

Preventing Mosquito Bites



Why is it important to prevent mosquito bites?

Mosquitoes can spread diseases that make you sick. In Massachusetts, mosquitoes can give you eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus and West Nile virus (WNV). Only a small number of mosquitoes are infected at any given time, so being bitten by a mosquito does not mean you will get sick. However, the best way to avoid both of these illnesses is to prevent mosquito bites.

What is the best way to prevent mosquito bites?

- Use mosquito repellent any time you are outdoors as even being out a short time can be long enough to get a mosquito bite. Make sure to follow directions on the label and use them wisely.
- Be aware of mosquitoes around you. If mosquitoes are biting you, reapply repellent or go inside.
- Be aware of peak mosquito hours. The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many species of mosquitoes. Take extra care to use repellent and protective clothing during evening and early morning -- or consider avoiding outdoor activities during these times if possible.
- Use mosquito netting on baby carriages or playpens when your baby is outdoors.
- When weather permits, wear long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors.
- Make sure screens are repaired and are tightly attached to doors and windows.
- Avoid camping overnight near freshwater swamps to reduce your risk of exposure. If you do go camping, use a tent with mosquito netting and use appropriate repellents.
- Remove standing water! Did you know that mosquitoes can multiply in any puddle or standing water that lasts for more than 4 days? Keep your yard free of any standing water by emptying unused wading pools or containers that might collect rainwater and encourage your neighbors to do the same. Change water in bird baths and pet bowls frequently. Check roof gutters and remove any debris that may prevent drainage of rainwater.

Health Department News (continued)

UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

LIGHT UP THE NIGHT: REMEMBERING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Westford Coalition for Non Violence in partnership with the Live for Liv Foundation, will be hosting a Domestic Violence program in recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The Westford Town common will be lit up with purple lights to symbolize this event. A short presentation will be given by Alvin Notice a police officer who lost his daughter as a result of domestic violence. Mr. Notice relates his story to help parents recognize the signs of possible abuse. DA Marian Ryan has also been invited to share her experiences and resources and the Westford Police Department will provide local statistics. Presentations will be followed by a candlelight vigil to remember those who have lost their lives to domestic violence this past year. Come join us. Feel free to bring your teenage children.



Date: Oct 16

Location: St. Catherine's Church Hall

Time: 7:00-9:00 pm

SUPPORT GROUP FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

This support group is free drop in group available to any parent who is concerned that their child might be struggling with a mental health issue. This can be something such as ADD, or some sadness, lots of worries or perhaps something more defined. This is a pro bono group offered for parents to come together and share ideas, offer support to each other and realize that they are not alone in our concern for our children. Facilitators are: Dianne Walsh, LICSW (Cognitive- Behavioral Therapist) and Sue Hanly, RN (school nurse).

Groups are offered the 2nd Tuesday of the month and are located at the Millennium School. You are welcome to have your email placed onto the group distribution list to be notified directly of changes of dates or cancelations.

The group is open to all—you do not have to be a Westford Resident

Sept 9 **Fall Transitions, Reconnecting After the Summer.** Fall is a stressful time of year for kids – lots of new kids, new teachers, new issues to address. This group will be discussion only and will focus on how we all survived the summer, what struggles are kids are facing this fall, and some problem solving

Oct 7 **Stigma – Why is it That in a World That is Focused on Physical Health – Eating Right, Exercise, Staying Safe – Can We Still Not Openly Discuss Mental Health?** This group will focus on being able to get support for both our children and ourselves in a society that still does not understand mental health.

(community events continued on next page)

Health Department News (continued)

UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS (continued)

GUIDING GOOD CHOICES

"Guiding Good Choices" is an exciting and interactive program for parents of middle school students. The course will give parents the skills they need to ensure the future well-being of their teen by learning to communicate effectively. Topics and discussion include: providing specific steps to develop strategic conversational guidelines with your teen; assisting parents in developing family guidelines and expectations for behavior; conflict management and the strengthening of family bonds; help parents increase teen involvement in the family; provide parents with 2012 Westford Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data; and help to facilitate creating a parent support network. This course will be taught by **Ms. Kathy Bowen**, Certified Life Empowerment Coach. Pre-registration is required call: rpeachey@westfordma.gov . Call Ray Peachey at 978-399-2528 for more information.

Dates : Oct 15, 22, 29, Nov 5th

Time: 9:30-11:00 AM

Location: FIRST PARISH CHURCH

Cost: FREE.

National Food Safety Education Month

September is National Food Safety Education Month, a perfect time for busy families to consider the importance of food safety. From top to bottom, a clean kitchen is the best line of defense between your family and food poisoning. Before you prepare and enjoy foods, eliminate common breeding grounds for dangerous bacteria:

- Everyone in your family should wash their hands often – front and back, between fingers, under fingernails – in warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds (or two choruses of "Happy Birthday") before and after every step in preparing or eating foods.
- Clean all work surfaces often to remove food particles and spills. Use hot, soapy water. Keep nonfood items – mail, newspapers, purses, reusable tote bags – off counters and away from food and utensils. Wash the counter carefully before and after food preparation, as well as items commonly touched such as cabinet knobs and the refrigerator handle.
- Wash dishes, cutting boards and cookware in the dishwasher or in hot, soapy water, and always rinse them well. Remember that chipped plates and china can collect bacteria.
- Replace old cutting boards that have cracks, crevices and excessive knife scars.
- Spills & food splatters inside your microwave can also collect bacteria, so clean it regularly too.
- Change towels and dishcloths often and wash them in the hot cycle of your washing machine. Allow them to dry out between each use. If they are damp, they're the perfect breeding ground for bacteria. Throw out dirty sponges or wash them in a bleach-water solution.
- On any appliance, clean spills right away. Wash appliances with hot, soapy water. Pay close attention to the refrigerator and the freezer shelves, sides and door where foods are stored.

For more information about food safety, from facts and figures to what more you can do to prevent it, visit www.HomeFoodSafety.org.

Health Department News (continued)

CURRENT INFORMATION ON THE EBOLA VIRUS

Ebola, previously known as Ebola hemorrhagic fever, is a rare and deadly disease caused by infection with one of the Ebola virus strains. The first Ebola virus was discovered in 1976 near the Ebola River in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since then, outbreaks have appeared sporadically in Africa. Based on evidence and the nature of other similar viruses, researchers believe that Ebola virus is animal-borne and that bats are the most likely reservoir.

Ebola virus is spread through direct contact with the blood or body fluids of a person who is sick with Ebola. Ebola is not spread through the air or by water or, in general, by food; however, in Africa, Ebola may be spread as a result of handling bushmeat (wild animals hunted for food) and contact with infected bats. The incubation period, from exposure to when signs or symptoms appear, is 2 to 21 days but the average is 8 to 10 days.

Healthcare providers caring for Ebola patients and the family and friends in close contact with Ebola patients are at the highest risk of getting sick because they may come in contact with the blood or body fluids of sick patients. Many world health organizations are involved.

Researchers believe the risk of a widespread outbreak in the US or MA is low due to our public-health support and the resources available to conduct surveillance and control the spread of the disease.

Please follow these guidelines and for additional information visit CDC's Travelers' Health website (wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel) for more information about the outbreak and for other health recommendations to the specific countries.